



SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 17-020

BY SENATOR(S) Williams A., Aguilar, Baumgardner, Cooke, Coram, Court, Crowder, Donovan, Fenberg, Fields, Garcia, Gardner, Guzman, Hill, Holbert, Jahn, Jones, Kagan, Kefalas, Kerr, Lambert, Lundberg, Marble, Martinez Humenik, Merrifield, Moreno, Neville T., Priola, Scott, Smallwood, Sonnenberg, Tate, Todd, Zenzinger, Grantham;
 also REPRESENTATIVE(S) Jackson, Arndt, Becker J., Becker K., Beckman, Benavidez, Bridges, Buck, Buckner, Carver, Catlin, Coleman, Covarrubias, Danielson, Esgar, Everett, Exum, Foote, Garnett, Ginal, Gray, Hamner, Hansen, Herod, Hooton, Humphrey, Kennedy, Kraft-Tharp, Landgraf, Lawrence, Lebsock, Lee, Leonard, Lewis, Liston, Lontine, Lundeen, McKean, McLachlan, Melton, Michaelson Jenet, Mitsch Bush, Navarro, Neville P., Pabon, Pettersen, Rankin, Ransom, Rosenthal, Saine, Salazar, Sias, Singer, Thurlow, Valdez, Van Winkle, Weissman, Willett, Williams D., Wilson, Winter, Wist, Young, Duran.

CONCERNING DESIGNATING THE FOURTH THURSDAY IN MARCH AS "TUSKEGEE AIRMEN COMMEMORATION DAY".

WHEREAS, Prior to World War II, African Americans had very limited roles in the defense of the nation and no role in military aviation; and

WHEREAS, The United States Army War College issued a grossly inaccurate and disparaging "Official Report" in 1925 with the intent to relegate African Americans to menial duty positions in the military; and

WHEREAS, More African Americans were receiving higher education by the time the United States was drawn into World War II, and therefore many were aspiring to more meaningful jobs in the military, including the role of airplane pilot; and

WHEREAS, The rapid expansion of aircraft production to meet the demand for air power during World War II in turn created a greater need for military pilots; and

WHEREAS, The public outcry from the African American population, African American media, and fair-minded people of all races resulted in the United States War Department extending the opportunity to fly airplanes to all military members, regardless of race; and

WHEREAS, The War Department's Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) Program authorized colleges and universities to train civilian students to increase the number of civilian pilots, thus contributing to military preparedness; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was one of six African American colleges and universities chosen to participate in the CPT Program, and helped open the door for the first African American military pilots; and

WHEREAS, In 1942, five men received the silver wings of Army Air Force pilots and were the first African Americans to qualify as military pilots in any branch of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, By the end of World War II, almost 1,000 African Americans had won their silver wings at Tuskegee Army Air Field, and almost half of those African Americans went on to serve the country in the European and Mediterranean theaters as combat mission fighter pilots; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen flew more than 15,000 sorties; destroyed over 1,000 German aircraft; received hundreds of Air Medals and more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses; and lost very few bomber aircraft to enemy air action during escort missions; and

WHEREAS, The outstanding performance record of the Tuskegee Airmen was unprecedented in military aviation history, thus disproving every adverse, prejudiced contention barring African Americans from becoming pilots prior to World War II; and

WHEREAS, The Tuskegee Airmen overcame segregation and prejudice to become one of the most prestigious, decorated, and respected fighting groups of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Nineteen documented original Tuskegee Airmen have direct connections in the State of Colorado; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Seventy-first General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:

That we, the General Assembly, in recognition of the Tuskegee Airmen's heroic efforts, designate the fourth Thursday in March "Tuskegee Airmen Commemoration Day", March being a special month for the Tuskegee Airmen as it was the month that the first cadets received their silver wings; the first maintenance crew began training at Chanute Field, IL; the first Pursuit Squadron (The 99th) was activated; and President George W. Bush, in 2007, presented the Congressional Gold Medal to the Tuskegee Airmen.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to Tuskegee University and the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals.



Kevin J. Grantham
PRESIDENT OF
THE SENATE



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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE
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